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From Soviet Woman to Global Sex Slave

by

Natalja Silver

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"The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways.

The point, however, is to change it."

-- Karl Marx

Abstract

The turbulence of transition from a centralized economy to a market economy together with new migration dynamics and the worsening status of women in the former Soviet Union contributed to the growth and spread of the trafficking of women and girls. Difficult economic and social conditions have led many women to accept risks associated with seeking economic opportunities abroad. This in turn placed a number of them in situations where they were vulnerable to exploitation by human traffickers. These same economic conditions have tempted other individuals to engage in trafficking.

This paper explores how economic changes, migration dynamics, and gender inequality affect trafficking of former Soviet women. In addition, it explains supply and demand factors as they drive human trafficking forces. Improving the economic and social conditions of women would shrink the vulnerable pool from which traffickers draw their victims; more effective punishment of traffickers would present a greater deterrent against this modern-day form of slavery.

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Preface

During Soviet times my mother worked as an engineer at a factory that produced car parts in the republic of Latvia. She had an appropriate education and training for this job; she performed well. She worked at this factory for over twenty years and enjoyed a stable income, enough to provide for herself and myself. With the collapse of USSR, many factories closed—including the factory where my mother worked. My educated and skilled mother found herself with no employment options other than washing dishes at a restaurant. Unfortunately, this became the reality for many people in the former Soviet Union, especially for women.

When I entered the workforce as a full time employee a few years after the Soviet Union had disintegrated, I worked 60-70 hours a week; sometimes I worked 100 hours a week. Work took most of my time and strength. My duties combined responsibilities of a sales person, a manager, a cleaning lady, a wholesale representative, a translator, a tour guide for foreign partners of our company, and a weight-lifter. In order to earn enough money to pay for a small rented apartment that I shared with a friend, to pay bills, and to buy food and some clothes, I had to work so much and so hard that I damaged my lower back; sometimes I was on the verge of losing consciousness. After a few years of this nightmare, I became exhausted and did not want to continue like this. Just as many other young women like me, I wanted a normal life with stable employment, reasonable wages, and reasonable work hours. Thoughts of emigration began to enter my mind. Finally I left Latvia and went to Ukraine, then later to England to try my luck there.

Work in England was difficult, but it paid well. I earned enough money to pay my bills, to travel, and to buy not only bare necessities but also things I simply wanted. I would call my emigration a success. Unfortunately, not all emigration is successful...

Introduction

Women trafficking is an illegal modern-day form of slavery encompassing much of the globe. Worldwide each month thousands of women and girls are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. After the fall of the Soviet Union, its vast territory opened to this criminal activity, resulting in thousands of broken minds and bodies. Deteriorating economic and social conditions resulted in sharply increased unemployment rates and widespread poverty. Women and children became the most affected strata of society. Women began to look abroad for economic opportunities in order to support themselves and their families; human traffickers, many of whom also found themselves in economic hardships, took advantage of this economic situation by luring many into seemingly innocent opportunities and then enslaving them for profit. The turbulence of transition from a centralized economy to a market economy together with new migration dynamics and the worsening status of women contributed to the growth and spread of trafficking of women and girls. Additionally, an apparent lack of interest or capacity on the part of the newly independent governments left former Soviet republics with inadequate legislation and enforcement means to combat trafficking in women; this together with corruption among law enforcement agents and courtrooms allowed human trade to flourish and increase to a global scale.

In this paper I argue that difficult economic and social conditions in the former Soviet Union have led many women to accept greater risk, which in turn placed a number of them in situations where they were vulnerable to exploitation by human traffickers. These same economic conditions also tempted other individuals to engage in trafficking. Economic changes, migration dynamics, and gender inequality all affect trafficking of former Soviet women.

Economic Migration Theory and Methodology

No single, unified definition of human trafficking exists. The most commonly used definition comes from the United Nations, which defines human trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (Office of the United Nations).

According to the Geneva-based inter-governmental organization called the International Organization for Migration (IOM):

Trafficking should be seen as a process, starting with the recruitment and ending with the exploitation of the victim's work. The main elements of the process are coercion, which could start at any moment during the process, and exploitation, which normally starts once the victim has been put to work (IOM, The Nature of Human Trafficking).

It is important to note that by definition trafficking includes those cases where women are aware of the true nature of the work at the point of departure, but upon arrival find themselves in situations where their rights and basic freedoms are violated (Bertone, 2000).

For simplicity, in this paper the term "former Soviet women" refers to women from all fifteen former Soviet republics regardless of their ethnicity, language or ideology. "Economic situation" or "economic conditions" refer to common patterns of unemployment, low paying employment, employment instability, lack of or minimal subsidies and/or welfare programs, economic insecurity, and widespread corruption. This is not to imply that all women who are involved in human trafficking have the same circumstances or find themselves in a poor economic situation. There are differences, especially inter-state differences in the economic and

social status of women; however, there are also prevailing trends that apply to the majority of former Soviet women.

I plan to employ Economic Labor Migration Theory as put forth by Valery Tishkov (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005), Zhanna Zayinchkovskaya (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005), Galina Vitkovskaya (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005), and George Borjas (Borjas, 1989), coupled with the Structural Approach emphasized by Monica Boyd (Boyd, 2003) and Zheng Wu (Wu), and the Structural plus Individual Approaches emphasized by Douglas Massey (Massey, 1990). These perspectives provide the theoretical framework for analyzing the migratory reasons and patterns of former Soviet women. They also frame how Soviet women have been affected by globalization and the changes that have taken place in the former Soviet republics. These theories facilitate an analysis of irregular (illegal) forms of migration, which is the type of migration most common for women who become involved in trafficking.

According to Economic Migration Theory, people migrate in search of better economic opportunities and other benefits (Borjas, 1989, p. 457). This theory suggests that “the exchanges among the various players are regulated by an immigration market” (Borjas, 1989, p. 457). Both “push and pull” factors play a role in the equation and deserve discussion.

Even though women are economic agents capable of making their own decisions (Boyd, 2003, p. 2), the structural perspective of Labor Migration Theory suggests that people’s lives and decisions are often strongly influenced by social, economic and political structures (Stalker's Guide). Massey notes that both individual and structural elements influence human migration (Massey, 1990, p. 7). He explains that “decisions are inevitably made by actors who weigh the costs and benefits of movement, but these decisions are always made within specific social and

economic contexts that are determined by larger structural relations in the political economy” (Massey, 1990, p. 7). Women on the territory of the former Soviet Union are naturally subject to such structures, and thus must operate within them. “Structural factors such as unemployment, or the influence of international media, or population pressure, for example, all can be seen as 'pushing' emigrants from their homes and 'pulling' them to their destinations” (Stalker's Guide, Structures section, para. 1).

For the purpose of investigating “push and pull” dynamics, economic conditions, and labor migration as they relate to trafficking of former Soviet women, I use a qualitative method of focusing on a singular case study of the primary factors involved in human trafficking of former Soviet women. I employ a comparative historical analysis to contrast economic conditions during the late Soviet Union with conditions in post-Soviet society. The consideration of economic factors sheds light on the process of degradation from a human being with respect and status in society down to a mere commodity to be sold and exploited.

I employ primary and secondary sources in my research. My personal, first-hand experience in the former Soviet Union has given me a valuable perspective on the conditions of life in the Soviet Union prior to the unraveling of Soviet society as well as after the fall of the Soviet Union; this experience serves as a form of de facto primary research. I add other viewpoints from the era to enrich the description. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic of human trafficking, data for my analysis of the more recent conditions comes largely from secondary sources consisting of scholarly articles, reports, documentaries, polling data, statistics, and other relevant sources of information. As the majority of available information on human trafficking in the former Soviet Union tends to cover Russian and Ukrainian victims, I draw

more heavily from their examples, but I also integrate information from other former Soviet Republics where appropriate.

In order to discover the reasons why many former Soviet women have chosen to migrate, one must look deep into the economic and social situation of post-Soviet society. I use the example of the Russian Federation to demonstrate the employment and status issues facing people in the post-Soviet era, in particular women. I chose Russia because it is a sending, transit and receiving country for trafficked women. This case can be used as a model to project onto other former Soviet republics. While there are certain structural, economic and social differences between these republics, especially in republics that experienced ethnic and/or religious wars and conflicts or land disputes after the fall of the USSR (Russia being one of them), many trends still apply across the various republics.

Human Trafficking Debate

Human trafficking has become a popular subject in recent years. More and more researchers have focused their attention on this global phenomenon and have attempted to explain its causes and consequences while also proposing solutions to deal with this problem. These researchers look at human trafficking from different perspectives: the gender perspective, global political economy perspective, legal perspective, criminology perspective, and even the religious perspective. Since human trafficking is an old problem in Asia, many studies have been conducted on human trafficking in that part of the world. However, with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, a new wave of human trafficking swept across the globe. While many works and analysis on the economic impact of the fall of the Soviet Union exist, research on the economic aspects of human trafficking from the territory of the former USSR is limited. The available research usually addresses migration from the former USSR, the fast-growing illegal

business of human trafficking in which mainly Russian criminal organized groups participate, and/or the plague of corruption infecting much of the former Soviet republics. Yet there is a lack of research on the economic conditions, migration dynamics, and status of women in that part of the world as they relate to and affect human trafficking.

Many Marxists, Marxist feminists and other historical materialists have pointed out the tendency of contemporary capitalism to commodify and exploit for profit every item possible. Anna Agathangelou, for instance, notes that in this world women's labor power and even their bodies are bought, sold, and exploited as a commodity for cheap wages (Agathangelou, 2004, p. 3). According to this perspective, the underlying focus of contemporary capitalist economics is on making profits; in order to do that economic conditions have to be kept at a certain status quo. The status quo in this case means that for maximizing profits a surplus-value has to be produced (Agathangelou, 2004, p. 11). In her view the production of surplus-value and the reproduction of labor are "subordinated to the logic of profit" (Agathangelou, 2004, p. 14). While such a view may reveal oppressive relations in the global economic system, it appears to fail to fully explain the reasons for women's participation in such oppressive business relations. This theory portrays women as silent, passive victims unable of escaping such difficult economic circumstances.

Kamala Kempadoo, Jo Doezema and Marjan Wijers (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998, p. 32) give more credit to women by arguing that they are not passive and incapable victims, but instead they are capable of making risky decisions in order to change the status quo and improve their economic situation as well as their social status. Wijers and Kempadoo (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998, p. 70), for instance, argue that many women migrate to larger cities or other countries in order to find a more stable source of income, which in turn helps them improve their economic status. In this case they should be viewed as labor migrants (Kempadoo & Doezema,

1998, p. 70). They further argue that laws prohibiting prostitution and restricting immigration put women in dangerous situations where they have to search for ways to immigrate illegally (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998, p. 17, 32). When women become illegal immigrants it becomes easier to take advantage of them. Kempadoo, Doezema and Wijers propose that in order to minimize occurrences of human trafficking and abuses, it is important to allow women to legally migrate so that they do not have to use shady organizations in order to enter a foreign country (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998, p. 71-72, 130). While less restrictive immigration policies may help women legally emigrate to other countries, they may still become victims of human trafficking. Even legal immigrants suffer lower levels of protection and fewer rights than full citizens. Being a legal immigrant but still involved in sex trafficking brings a social stigma upon the trafficked victims because they are considered “dirty” by mainstream society. These researchers want to promote greater opportunities for legal migration and support legalization of prostitution, but their arguments do not provide convincing evidence that this course of action can minimize sex trafficking and abuses.

In contrast, Donna Hughes (Hughes, 2000, p. 12) does not think that legalizing and regulating prostitution would minimize trafficking; on the contrary, she claims it would increase trafficking in order “to meet the demand created by a legalized sex industry.” She does not agree with some feminist researchers who argue that open migration is the key to curbing human trafficking. She notes: “Increased migration also serves as a cover for traffickers in transporting women to destinations in the sex industry” (Hughes, 2000, p. 3). Generally, she focuses on the supply and demand aspects of human trafficking and points out that “countries with large sex industries create the demand,” while countries where traffickers recruit women create the supply (Hughes, 2000, p. 1). Hughes’ research analyzes human trafficking associated with the territory

of the former Soviet Union. According to Hughes: “The disintegration of the Soviet Union opened borders for travel, migration and privatized trade, all of which facilitated the operations of criminal networks” and paved the way for human trafficking (Hughes, 2000, p. 4). Hughes assesses the economic situation that followed the disintegration of the USSR and points out some of the reasons why human trafficking has been so widespread in that territory. She sees government corruption as well as cooperation between criminals and government officials as one of the main problems (Hughes, 2000, p. 2, 9). She believes that combating corruption and criminalizing the traffickers will help minimize human trafficking. While corruption is a real problem facing all fifteen former Soviet republics, and many traffickers act with virtual impunity, I argue that in order to reduce human trafficking in the former USSR a combination of issues needs to be addressed and dealt with internally: unemployment, the status of women, opportunities for women, stable income, child support, welfare benefits, subsidies, national market protection, corruption reduction, and proper law enforcement.

Human Slavery: From Ancient to Present

Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. It is a demeaning and criminal activity, which inflicts physical and emotional wounds upon the victims. Eradicating human trafficking can be a very difficult task because it often employs agents within the organizations best suited to fight it. Moreover, the practice is not new: many ancient civilizations engaged in slavery. The Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Chinese and Arab civilizations, African tribes and the Maya, Aztec and Inca civilizations, as well as the European empires, all acquired and employed slaves (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 45, 101, 126, 229, 333, 465, 556). Slaves served as a source of cheap labor, victims in human sacrifice rituals, and victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. In times of naval prowess, pirates bought and sold slaves. Those committing crimes

could be “sentenced to slavery” (History World, An Evil of Civilization section, para. 4).

Indebted people who could not repay their debt often became slaves, and many poor families sold their children into slavery in order to survive (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 101, 126). Ancient trade routes provided for the movement of slaves from one land to another; however, slavery remained relatively limited in scope due to the more primitive means of transportation available for covering great distances and a general lack of good roads. During those times there were no international treaties prohibiting slavery.

Slavery continued in some parts of the world during the Middle Ages, while in Europe and Russia serfdom largely replaced slavery (History World, Slaves in the Middle Ages: 6th – 15th century AD section, para. 7). Beginning in the 15th century the world witnessed slavery on a scale like never before. Vast and powerful European Empires took the place of ancient civilizations, replacing the smaller monarchies of the Middle Ages. First Portugal and Spain, then England, France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and later the new United States, each contributed to the devastating effects of global slavery (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 553-554). They created the Atlantic Slave Trade route connecting the Eastern hemisphere with the Western hemisphere. Slaves became the number one commodity in trade and fostered production. It is estimated that over ten million African slaves were transported to the New World for forced labor (Massey et al., 1998, p. 1). They worked in African mines or were shipped to work in South American mines as well as on sugar, cotton and cocoa plantations in the Americas and the Caribbean (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 465-466, 474); other African and European slaves were transported to Southeast Asia (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 479), slaves from India and Africa served in English palaces, and slaves from Asian and American indigenous populations were subjected to hard labor and abuse (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 466). At the expense of slaves,

European and American economies grew and their upper and middle classes prospered. Many poor women of Europe lived a life similar to that of a slave (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 508-510); urban semi-voluntary and forced prostitution ran rampant. Due to horrible economic conditions, women resorted to sex work as a last chance for their own survival and the survival of their children (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 510).

Over time many people around the world became discontented with slavery and formed movements to fight against it. In 1807 the British Empire, which had become extremely wealthy by exploiting human beings and extracting natural resources from their colonies, passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act and fined those who disobeyed it (Brummett et al., 2003, p. 556). In 1833 the British Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, according to which all slaves in the British Empire received their freedom (Anti-slavery Society). Other countries took similar actions. However, that is not to say that slavery disappeared from the face of the earth; no, far from it. Wherever economic conditions were difficult and law was weak, slavery could continue with relative impunity.

Laws for the abolition of slavery led to an increase in international agreements against the practice. In 1927 under the League of Nations, the Slavery Convention signed in Geneva the previous year entered into force, consolidating the intent of many countries to legally suppress slavery. While the law further suppressed legal ownership of another individual, trafficking in persons for the sake of prostitution continued. After establishment of the United Nations, in an effort to curb prostitution, the UN passed The Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; it entered into force in 1951 (Office of the United Nations). The United Nations soon ratified the Slavery Convention in 1953, which was amended and entered into force on 7 July 1955 (Office of the United Nations). To address

the criminal nature of modern human trafficking, particularly to provide a “universal instrument that addresses all aspects of trafficking in persons,” the UN passed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2000 (Office of the United Nations). This convention states:

Countries that ratify the Protocol are obliged to enact domestic laws making these activities criminal offences, if such laws are not already in place.... In addition to taking action against traffickers, the Protocol requires states that ratify it to take some steps to protect and assist trafficked persons. Trafficked persons would be entitled to confidentiality and have some protection against offenders, in general and when they provide evidence or assistance to law enforcement or appear as witnesses in prosecutions or similar proceedings. Some social benefits, such as housing, medical care and legal or other counseling are also provided for (Office of the United Nations).

In 2005 in the European Union, the “Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings was adopted by the Committee of Ministers...and opened for signature in Warsaw on 16 May 2005, on the occasion of the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States” (Council of Europe). By October 2007 ten countries ratified the Convention, allowing it to enter into force on February 1, 2008 (Council of Europe). As of March 2008, sixteen countries ratified the Convention and 22 other Council of Europe member states have signed the Convention; hopefully they will decide to ratify it in the future (Council of Europe).

In the distant past slavery was mostly legal, condoned by various empires. However, the abolition of slavery and the emergence of international anti-trafficking laws have pronounced slavery an illegal criminal activity; this has pushed the practice to the darkness of the underground world. While international anti-trafficking laws and in some cases national anti-trafficking laws are in place, a challenge remains with implementing and enforcing them—

especially in countries of the former Soviet Union. Exact numbers from the criminal underground are unavailable, but based on a collection of information gleaned the United Nations estimates that there are currently 27 million people in slavery around the world; and between 700,000 and 4 million individuals are believed to be trafficked each year worldwide, the majority being women and children (Dodson, para. 2; UNFPA). The estimated total human trafficking annual market value is US\$32 billion; the value of global trade in women for sex industries is estimated to be between US\$7-12 billion a year (Hughes, 2000, p. 1). Over 100,000 people are trafficked each year from the former Soviet Union for prostitution and sex industry (Hughes, 2002, p. 5); most of these are women and girls from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, but women from the other 11 former Soviet republics are trafficked as well. International and national laws help somewhat to impede trafficking generally; however, they tend to not improve the economic conditions of millions of people who find themselves in desperate conditions and resort to disobeying laws in order to improve standards of living.

Structural Forces

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the Soviet republics entered a transition period moving from a centralized economic system to a market economy (from Communism to Capitalism). The former Soviet republics attempted to integrate their economies into the global market economy with its emphasis on trade liberalization and privatization. This transition coupled with globalization opened new opportunities but also brought new challenges with it. Former Soviet Union populations found themselves a part of new capitalist structures in which competition and the rule of survival of the fittest dominate. Monica Boyd and Zheng Wu explain that “structural forces form the basic incentives for migration” and “remain powerful causal factors” for migration (Wu, para. 1). Such structural forces can include unemployment, low paying jobs, low

status of women, poverty, and lack of economic opportunity. Massey argues that “although it may be true that rational decisions are made to maximize expected returns, these decisions are always constrained by specific local conditions” (Massey, 1990, p. 7). He further argues that “available evidence suggests that a large share of moves are not volitional but are structurally imposed by conditions beyond the individual's control, most commonly economic dislocations” (Massey, 1990, p. 7). Such economic dislocations can produce a large pool of individuals who look outside of their familiar environment to improve their economic and social conditions. In this case migration can serve as a means for such improvement. Wu points out: “Economic problems associated with globalization have made labor migration an important survival strategy for many Third World families” (Wu, para. 2). The same can be said about Second World families.

Due to restrictive immigration laws, legal migration is not always possible and many people resort to illegal means. In the example of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and through the lens of Economic Labor Migration Theory, Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya and Vitkovskaya explain that the “most important reason for irregular [illegal] migration spreading within the region includes economic crisis, unemployment and low living standards” (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005, p. 31). Wu, drawing his argument from studies conducted by Massey and colleagues, supports this view by noting that “empirical evidence suggests that a crucial impetus for international migration is the combination of systemic unemployment in the sender population and good employment prospects in the receiver population” (Wu, para. 2). Thousands of former Soviet women face this combination of systemic unemployment and low standards of living; but it was not always so.

During the late years of the Soviet Union the majority of men and women worked. The official working age for women was between 16 and 55 years of age, while the working age for men was between 16 and 60 years of age (Donahue, 2004, p. 4). During Soviet times “there was a great deal of equality between the genders, at least in terms of labor” (Donahue, 2004, p. 9). “Day care and maternity leave programs had the unexpected benefit of encouraging female labor force participation” (Donahue, 2004, p. 9). Even though in Soviet society it was a woman’s responsibility to do housework and raise children, it was easier for women to juggle housekeeping responsibilities with full-time employment because the Soviet economic and social structure secured women’s jobs when they were pregnant or gave birth, in addition to providing paid maternity leave, free or very inexpensive child care, and after-school programs.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, however, the economic situation worsened for both men and women: unemployment rates increased while wages decreased. Women found themselves in an especially disadvantaged position. Soviet benefits of maternity leave, job security, and free day care rapidly deteriorated, making it more difficult for women to hold a stable job while raising children and taking care of homes. According to the 1997 Rybinsk survey data, “average monthly earnings of a woman under 30 were less than 300 Roubles while monthly pay for the kindergarten [was] 600 Roubles” (Mezentseva, p. 4). This new economic situation made it almost impossible for young mothers to seek employment.

Globalization, liberalization and privatization in the capitalist system exposed former Soviet women to the global realities of the economic and social position of women around much of the world. In many countries it is evident that women suffer from higher levels of discrimination than men, have lower wages, and have fewer job opportunities. In most societies the responsibility to do housework and raise children lies with women, while at the same time

many women have full-time or part-time employment in order to support themselves and their families. Because economic and social inequality tends to lead to lower paying jobs or unemployment, many women seek financially better job offers in bigger cities or abroad. In the process of looking for a new job beyond one's familiar environment, many women fall prey to trafficking for sexual exploitation, rape and abuse. While for many former Soviet women migration is an escape route from difficult economic and social circumstances, for some it is an entry into the dark illegal world of trafficking in human beings. Intra-state and inter-state migration is widespread in the former Soviet Union and includes legal and illegal migration. Tishkov et al. point out that human trafficking is "one of the most savage and cynical kinds of organized businesses in the area of irregular [illegal] migration, as it deals with sexual exploitation of women and children" (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005, p. 31).

The Case of the Russian Federation

In Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union the ratio of employed men to women remained similar in the 1990s; between 1992 and 1996 almost as many women worked as men (see Table 1). Unemployment rates were even closer with unemployed men numbering slightly higher than women.

Table 1 Russia's Employment Statistics by Gender

Indicators	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Total labor force	75,665	75,012	73,962	72,872	72,788
Men	38,880	38,714	39,077	38,899	38,839
Women	36,785	36,298	34,885	33,973	33,949
including:					
Total employed	72,071	70,852	68,484	66,441	66,000
Men	37,063	36,560	36,132	35,413	35,112
Women	35,008	34,292	32,352	31,028	30,888
Total unemployed (WLO)	3,594	4,160	5,478	6,431	6,788
Men	1,817	2,154	2,945	3,486	3,727
Women	1,777	2,006	2,533	2,945	3,061
Note: <i>Rossia v tsifrah</i> (1997, p. 33, Table 3.1). There are no data for 1991. 1992 was the first year for which unemployment was calculated according to the methodology of the World Labor Organisation (WLO)					

Table 2 below shows that in Russia between 1995 and 2002, 67% of men over 15 years of age were economically active; however, only 53% of women over 15 years of age were economically active (Table 2).

Table 2 Economic Activity by Gender

Demographic Variable	Country	Data
Economically Active, Female, Ages 15+, 1995-2002 (%)	Russia	53
Economically Active, Male, Ages 15+, 1995-2002 (%)	Russia	67

Source: Population Reference Bureau

Unfortunately, statistical numbers do not show the real hardships women face in the labor market: even if they do work their wages may be so low that they cannot afford to support themselves and their families. The number of single parent households is also rising; in the majority of cases these households are headed by women (Kalabikhina, 1999, p. 2).

Women find it difficult to achieve affluence in post-Soviet Russian society. With the fall of the USSR, wages also fell: “The female/male earnings ratio fell from 66% in 1989, to 61% in 1993, at a moment when real wages for the men too have decreased dramatically” (Katz, p. 1). According to some specialists, “the gender gap indicate[s] that, in both years, the greater part is due to differential rewards but that gender differences in hours worked contribute more to the wage gap in 1993 than in Soviet times” (Katz, p. 1). In the transition from a centralized economy to a contemporary market economy, the quality of jobs available to women has deteriorated, increasing the gender gap (Gerber & Perelli-Harris, p. 2). Most women work in the public sector of national economies. In social services women constitute approximately 65-80%

of personnel, but “the size of their wages is less than 60% of the minimum subsistence level and represent about 60-70% of the national average” (Mezentseva, p. 2). Many women are a part of the “working poor” category.

Gender inequality is evident in the kind of work available to women and in their wages, yet an interesting contrast exists in higher education where women dominate. Between 1992 and 2000, the number of male students increased by 25%, but the number of female students increased by approximately 50%, which led to a “feminization of higher education with 57% of women and only 43% of men” (Mezentseva, p. 1). Post-Soviet Russia has seen an increase in female students, but unfortunately possession of higher education by women has not resulted in any sizeable increase in well-paying jobs for them. In fact, the gap between male earnings and female earnings continues to widen. In the 1980s, “the wages of women constituted, on average, 70% of men's, [but] by the end of 1999 this figure had dropped to 52%, and in 2000, to only 50%” (Mezentseva, p. 2).

In the late 80s and early 90s many post-Soviet republics underwent economic reforms including trade liberalization and privatization. Instead of a somewhat self-sufficient economy, Russia moved to an export economy, especially in the oil, natural gas, and timber sectors (Gaddy, 2007; Lankin, 2002, p. 8, 12). With the shift from a centralized economy to a market economy, the profits from industry, exports, and other production became concentrated in the hands of a few (Kotlobay, 2002, p. 10), while the majority of people—especially women and children—found it difficult to make ends meet.

Mismanagement of the initial liberalization and reforms led to the devastating economic crisis of 1998; however, since then Russia has implemented more reforms and liberalization

practices. These developments coupled with a windfall from rising world oil prices provided for Russia's GDP growth and an overall improvement of Russia's economy.

Russia's GDP has soared by 48% in the last six years. Household consumption went up by 48.1%, while fixed-assets investment volumes skyrocketed by 72%. Investment growth outpaced production and consumption, thereby facilitating greater business activity. This had a great impact on structural GDP changes and sector production patterns. Industrial output increased by 53.4% in 2004 over 1998 levels, with that of the agro-industrial sector going up by 26.4%. A revamped service market infrastructure emerged during economic reforms and boosted commodity production (Kulikova, 2005, Russian Economic Development in 1999-2004 section, para. 2).

In turn commodity production increased by 57.5% between 1998 and 2004, with the volume of market services growing by 43.4% during the same period (Kulikova, 2005, Russian Economic Development in 1999-2004 section, para. 2). Compared to 1998, the volume of telecommunications services also grew by 238.7%, and retail trade increased by 49.3% (Kulikova, 2005, Russian Economic Development in 1999-2004 section, para. 2).

Unfortunately, such economic growth is not universally shared among all the former Soviet republics; some of them, especially those in Central Asia, continue to experience more hardships in their economies.

Even Russia's economic growth has produced mixed results. In large cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg where economic activity is booming, many people saw an improvement in their standard of living, income and quality of life. Yet in rural areas and small towns, many people found themselves outside of this new economic order. The obvious trend is a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Unfortunately, many women and children found themselves victims of unequally distributed resources, income, and job opportunities. While gender inequality may not be easily apparent on the territory of the former Soviet Union, a closer look reveals that it is more difficult for women to find stable jobs with reasonably high pay than

it is for men. Even with high levels of education, many women find themselves trying to juggle housekeeping responsibilities, care for their children, and full-time jobs. These additional responsibilities lead women to accept available yet lower-paying jobs rather than go without a job until they find something that pays more. Many men leave rural areas and small towns in search for better jobs and income, but a large number of women find themselves constrained to remain in order to meet family obligations such as care for children or elderly parents. However, women are also economic agents who make their own choices and decisions; many women do take risks and leave for bigger cities or even foreign countries (Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998, p. 70). Such is the case for many former Soviet families. For a fair number of women, desperate circumstances drive them to leave their children in the care of aging grandparents while they search for work in larger cities or abroad hoping to send remittances to their families back home. Some women, especially young girls, consider the possibility of working abroad as a prostitute for a few months to make enough money to improve their living conditions back home. Many of those who choose this route consider such activity as only a necessary transitional period that precedes better employment.

In the structural setting described above labor migration may be one of just a few options available to improve one's economic and social status; however, labor migration as any other migration is plagued by insecurities and dangers.

Labor Migration

During Soviet times migration to countries outside of the Soviet Union was very limited (Malynovska, 2006, Historical Background section, para. 12); however, with the collapse of the Soviet Union the borders opened, allowing a large portion of the population freedom of movement. Female migration became a common aspect in migration patterns. Poor economic

conditions for many people, especially poor economic and social conditions for women, added to women's despair and willingness to leave their country in search for a better life (Corrin, 2005; Hughes, 2002, p. 7).

It is not difficult to understand why people from the poorer regions of the globe wish to migrate to more prosperous countries. People have always moved within regions or from one region to another in order to improve their standard of living, to give their children better opportunities to get ahead, or to escape from poverty, war, and famine. This is the iron rule of migration that has governed since the beginning of time" (IOM, About Migration).

This iron rule of migration dictates and influences the migration patterns. Tishkov and colleagues use the example of CIS to support the iron rule of migration and explain that "in addition to personal insecurity...an economic depression has become the most important reason for migration after the disintegration of the USSR" (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005, p. 2).

Industrial production in the CIS region has been reduced nearly by half, investments have been decreased three times, the number of officially registered unemployed reached 3.5 million, and salaries have been drastically reduced. Purely economic factors have determined the character of migration flows during the whole post-Soviet period. People migrated both inside and outside the CIS region in search of better living conditions. They migrated not only to escape poverty and ethnic tension, but also to pursue individual advancement, i.e. to better their lives to the level of their personal expectations, given their educational background, financial resources, etc. It's quite another matter that their expectations did not always come true" (Tishkov, Zayinchkovskaya & Vitkovskaya, 2005, p. 2).

Donna Hughes expresses a similar view in writing about migration and human trafficking in the Russian Federation:

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has gone through ten years of severe economic decline, which has included the demise of the social welfare and health care systems, leaving many Russian citizens without jobs, social benefits or adequate health care. While many people have suffered since the collapse of the Soviet Union, women and children have in many ways suffered disproportionately. In addition, there has been a substantial increase in criminal activity within the last decade. To escape the drastically deteriorating conditions,

many people, especially women, are seeking ways to go abroad. In contrast to the deteriorating conditions in Russia, the people of Russia have been bombarded with images of glamour and wealth from the West by the media. Many Russians believe these images represent the average standard of living and way of life in the US and Western Europe (Hughes, 2002, p. 7).

Hania Zlotnik adds that “the social and economic situation of women in developed countries, where women have access to a variety of educational and employment opportunities, acts as a magnet for women wishing to be economic and social actors in their own right” (Zlotnik, 2003, Female Migrants Claim Larger Proportion in Developed Countries section, para. 3). Timothy Heleniak notes that “Russian women fall victim to trafficking for reasons similar to those found elsewhere in the world—high female unemployment and few job opportunities, an idealized view of life in the West, and lack of enforcement and legislation against trafficking” (Heleniak, 2002, Brain Drain and Trafficking to the "Far Abroad" section, para. 5). Furthermore, some studies show that there exists “a statistical relationship between the number of victims trafficked out of a country and the level of female youth unemployment in that country” (Danailova-Trainor & Belser, 2006, p. iv). Olena Malinovska explains a cause of migration and trafficking from Ukraine:

In the context of low salaries and unemployment within Ukraine, labor migration became a mass phenomenon at the end of the 1990s... The worst form of illegal migration—human trafficking, in particular of young women—has become an increasing phenomenon in Ukraine. Feminization of unemployment and poverty in the early 1990s caused women to migrate (Malinovska, 2006, Transit, Illegal Migration, and Human Trafficking section, para. 5).

Unemployment, low wages, and poor living conditions “push” people out of their countries as they seek better jobs and opportunities.

In addition to the “push” factor, the “pull” factor is also present. Economic incentives appear to be a primary driving force for migration of former Soviet women; in economic migration theory these incentives are called the “pull” factor. Incentives “pull” people out of

their home countries toward the receiving countries because they present more favorable conditions. According to the IOM, “Higher demand for labor in the developed economies and availability of labor in underdeveloped economies has set global labor migration in motion. The huge global labor market has offered employers the chance to hire migrant workers as part of their cost minimization strategies” (IOM, About Migration). The “pull and push” dynamics create a large pool of individuals on the move. An economic perspective considers human trafficking as a large scale business with supply and demand, push and pull, and profits and wages relationships. Rey Koslowski notes that the “consumer demand for sex with “exotic” foreign women [fuels] a growing industry that capitalizes on vulnerable illegal migrants” (Kyle & Koslowski, 2001, p. 352). In economics, demand drives supply for profitable and successful business; thus if there is a high demand in “exotic” women in the developed world, entrepreneurs will find a way to provide the supply. Unfortunately, the supply often comes from the developing world and transition economies. Existing legislation and law enforcement in developed countries tends to minimize the legal import of this supply, hence illegal immigration “creates vulnerability to abuse” and often is “associated with participation in the informal or shadow economy” (Boyd, 2004, p. 10). Some suggest that reducing migration, especially illegal migration, could save women from entering abusive enterprises; such thinking seems to be behind the anti-immigration policies of many countries. However, this suggestion overlooks the essential aspect of the demand which motivates trafficking. A second central aspect is the poor economic and social conditions of women in the sending countries, which creates a supply of those more easily exploited. While such conditions of demand and supply continue to persist, migration is unlikely to decrease—which means trafficking in women is unlikely to decrease until demand is reduced and supply is diminished.

The Neoclassical Economic Model claims that liberalization of international capital markets decreases migration; however, recent trends show that the opposite is often the case (Kyle & Koslowski, 2001, p. 339). Liberalized international trade in goods and services has paved the way for both legal and illegal activities alike. It is not a secret that illegal goods are transported via established transportation routes of legal goods; trafficking routes often overlap with other trade routes due to the ease of using existing infrastructure. Traffickers simply use female migration for expanding their lucrative business.

Inside the Human Trade

After the fall of the Soviet Union economic and social circumstances compelled many to look for alternative means of employment or income-generating enterprises. While many people pursued honorable means, unfortunately a large number turned to criminal activities such as drug trafficking, weapon smuggling, car theft, personal identity theft, credit card theft, and human trafficking. Today, a decade and a half later, the economic, political and social situation is still less than desirable due to high levels of poverty, unemployment, alcoholism, domestic violence, inflation, corruption, bribery, and crime. A number of people still prosper at the expense of others. Instead of a happy, new life in a stable society, many post-Soviet women and girls receive inhumane treatment as modern-day sex slaves.

Kidnapping and deception play a role in underhanded recruitment, but some women knowingly choose to immigrate and work as prostitutes, voluntarily offering their services. Some women and girls resort to migration and prostitution out of desperation. They probably do not fully realize the high risk that they may never come back. Some women are aware of the possibility of being trafficked yet still go, believing that it will not happen to them (Malarek, 2004, p. xii).

Unfortunately, too often it *does* happen to them and they become part of the human trade, regardless of economic situation, level of education, nationality, or native language. The demand for former Soviet women is high and growing in Turkey, Israel, Egypt, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Switzerland, Greece, Italy, the United States, Canada, Japan, China, Korea, Macau, and many other countries (Galster, 1997; Hughes, 2000). “Originally, Latin America and Asia were the main sources of women for the trafficking business; [now] the former Eastern Bloc is an increasingly important source of women for trafficking networks” (Galster, 1997). In the former USSR, women seeking work abroad or marriage abroad become the main source pool from which traffickers draw their victims (Hughes, 2000, p. 1).

Traffickers take advantage of women’s poor economic situation by luring them into seemingly innocent opportunities and then enslaving them for profit. Many women turn to agencies that promise work abroad as waitresses, nannies, models, dancers, housekeepers, or cleaners. Travel documents, airfare tickets, and expenses are provided by such agencies. However, upon arrival, traffickers confiscate their passports and money, and then sell the women to pimps (Hughes, 2000, 4-12). The pimps tell the women to work hard to repay their debts for arranging all the documents, visas, airfare, and the price for which the pimp bought the woman (Hughes, 2000, p. 7). Pimps often keep their foreign “sex workers” in isolation in well-guarded brothels, massage parlors, apartments, or private villas, forcing them into day and night prostitution (Stone, 1999). Women and girls are fed promises that once the debt is repaid, they can start working for themselves and make a lot of money to send back to their families (Stone, 1999). Many times this turns out to be a lie, a clever psychological tactic that traffickers and pimps use to encourage cooperation. Many women go through a great deal of suffering in order to get out of debt and earn some money, only to be sold to another pimp or smuggled into

another country to be sold and forced into prostitution there. When smuggled, women are often forced to make a long and dangerous journey through deserts, over mountains, and across rivers in order to illegally cross a border into another country (Malarek, 2004, p. xiii; Task Force, 2006). Many women are resold three or four times to various pimps, which makes it very difficult to locate them and their victimizers.

Besides deceptive agencies that offer work abroad, there are many independent traffickers and recruiters. These actors know somebody that could be trafficked or somebody who would be willing to buy a trafficked person. Women fall prey to people they know and somewhat trust. Many women and girls are deceived into a false opportunity, fall into violent treatment by their traffickers, are raped and beaten by their new owners (pimps), then are regularly raped and abused against their will by their clients (Hughes, 2000, p. 4, 7). In isolation they find themselves without recourse for any injustices suffered. Those who resist are beaten, drugged and starved until they succumb and do whatever they are told to do. The violence against women often leads to permanent injuries and even death. Those who fight to the death or succumb to sexually transmitted diseases are simply dumped on the streets, unknown and uncared for, their bodies ultimately tossed into unmarked graves. In Italy, for example, “police report that one woman in prostitution is murdered each month...women are mutilated and murdered as warnings to competing traffickers and pimps and as punishment for refusing to engage in prostitution” (Hughes, 2000, p. 7). “In Istanbul, Turkey, two Ukrainian women were thrown off a balcony and killed, while six of their Russian friends watched” (Hughes, 2000, p. 7). Women are kept in constant fear for their lives or—as a matter of blackmail—the lives of their children and loved ones back home (Hughes, 2000, p. 7). Traffickers often know where women’s families live and threaten to harm them if women do not comply (Hughes, 2000, p. 7).

Without proper documentation or social support networks, trafficked women and girls become abused illegal immigrants stranded in foreign countries; countries tend to treat them as illegal criminals rather than innocent victims. Labor migration turns into a labor nightmare. Many trafficked women who are caught by police or immigration services are verbally and sometimes physically abused, imprisoned and deported from foreign countries back home without any investigation, being treated as “dirty prostitutes” and illegal immigrants (Hughes, 2000, p. 4, 7). Most of these women need medical attention because they are emotionally, mentally and physically broken and/or ill (Bienstock, 2005). Many have been compelled to complete risky abortions, have suffered tearing, physical torture, and illnesses, as well as risk contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) such as HIV/AIDS. Often authorities fail to provide much needed medical and psychological support. Nonetheless, many women see their deportation as a relief and the only way of escaping the forced sex industry (Hughes, 2000, p. 5). Yet they are still afraid that they will be hunted by the traffickers and abused again or killed, especially if they dare testify against them. For women who are deported before the repayment of their “initial debts,” the debts can follow them home; traffickers find them and force them to return and work until their debt is completely paid, which of course they ensure rarely happens (Stone, 1999). Aware of the brutality of traffickers, the corruption of police, and fearing for the lives of their family members, many women see no option but to comply.

Unfortunately, the commodification of human beings is not an isolated problem in the former Soviet Union; it is a global phenomenon linked to capitalism, trade liberalization, and globalization. For many traffickers, pimps and others who support this degrading business, women are viewed as a commodity and as a cheap labor force that can generate sizable profits. In Israel, for example, “a Russian or Ukrainian woman earns the pimp who controls her between

US\$50,000 and \$100,000 per year” (Hughes, 2000, p. 5). Prices for buying a woman usually start at \$300-700, but then go up as traffickers and middle persons resell them and make their own profits (Hughes, 2000, p. 6). In countries with easy entry laws, such as Turkey for instance, prices are approximately \$1,000-2,000 per woman; however, in countries into which it is more difficult to enter, such as the United States, Canada, Israel, and United Kingdom, prices range from \$5,000 to \$30,000 per woman (Bienstock, 2005; Hughes, 2000, p. 7-8; Stone, 1999). Even buying a woman for \$20,000 or \$30,000 will bring more money to a pimp who is prostituting her, especially since prostitute services are more expensive in these countries.

Trafficking and prostituting women and girls indeed brings sizable profits and often goes unpunished; some police officers, security officers and even government officials participate in generating profits from this trade (Caldwell, 1997). Sometimes, risking their lives, women escape their captives and run to the police. This does not always secure freedom because in many recipient countries, especially countries with ineffective law enforcement, police return escaped victims back to their pimps for a kickback (Hughes, 2002, p. 23). Those who escaped but were returned suffer enormously brutal punishments; they are often severely battered and starved as a lesson to deter them from running away again, while also serving as an example to the other prostitutes. In addition, monetary penalties are placed on them, increasing their “debt,” so they have to work longer before receiving any pay. In general, quite often pimps find ways to conjure additional penalties so that the women are unable to ever fully repay their “debt.” Reasons for penalty can include rebellious behavior, not fully satisfying a client, complaining, saying something that a pimp does not like, and many other ridiculous excuses (Hughes, 2000, p. 5, 7).

Some former Soviet governments have made progress in the fight against trafficking. Between 2003 and 2007, eleven out of fifteen former Soviet republics ratified the UN's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Signature and Ratification, 2000). These newly independent countries include:

2003 – Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania
2004 – Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Ukraine
2005 – Moldova
2006 – Georgia

Tajikistan and Turkmenistan acknowledged the Protocol but did not sign or ratify it; Uzbekistan signed it in 2001 but did not ratify it, and Kazakhstan did not take any action (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Signature and Ratification, 2000). Countries ratifying this UN Convention must incorporate it into their national laws. While this was a very important step, nonetheless trafficking in these countries did not cease; on the contrary, it continues to grow.

Inna Shvab, a manager of the Human Rights Center La Strada in Ukraine, explains that “the protocol to the Convention of 2000 was ratified by many countries, but national legislations did not change” (Kyiv Weekly, 2006, para. 11). Shvab is “convinced that state bodies practically do nothing about blocking the channels of human trafficking through the border...Ukraine's budget for 2007 envisages no money for fighting human trafficking” (Kyiv Weekly, 2006, para. 14). Since many governments are largely indifferent to the issue of trafficking in human beings—or are profiting by the trade—it grows rapidly. Weak law enforcement practices in many sending and receiving countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Israel, Turkey, Egypt and others, coupled with corruption and disrespect for women's rights and poor economic conditions, make it very difficult to punish the traffickers and pimps or help the

trafficked women and girls. An apparent lack of interest on the part of some governments and law enforcement officials has allowed the human trade to flourish and increase to a global scale; some officials simply do not care, some are unsure about how to address the issue, while some take bribes and turn a blind eye (Galster, 1997; Hughes, 2002, p. 21-22; Kyiv Weekly, 2006). Those officials who do want to combat trafficking are not always sure how to approach the issue and have “trouble differentiating between the illegal immigrants who are doing [sex work] and those that are truly trafficked;” a difficulty facing them is that the two groups are “very hard to distinguish, because a lot of women who are trafficked [will not] fess up to that” because they are afraid of retaliation by the traffickers (Bienstock, 2005).

The courts in many countries still operate as they did before, without taking into account the new global problem of trafficking. Many laws and judicial systems are not set up for punishing traffickers. In addition, traffickers usually have more money than the trafficked victims and hence can pay for a connected lawyer. For example, in 2004 a trafficker named Vlad stood trial for human trafficking in Ukraine (Frontline). The woman whom Vlad had trafficked was torn from her husband and five-year-old son while being pregnant, forced to live as a prisoner for months and suffer beatings, drugging, rape, and forced prostitution in addition to suffering all of the accompanying psychological and physical stress (Frontline). According to the law, Vlad was supposed to receive a sentence of eight to fifteen years in prison. The evidence against him was clear, and he was pronounced guilty; but instead of eight to fifteen years in prison, he received five years on probation—meaning he walked free with a slap on his wrist, told to not do it again (Frontline). His victim, who was willing to testify, was not even officially notified of the day and time of the trial (Frontline). What justice is that to the victim?

When asked how Vlad managed to get off so easily, he simply claimed that he had a good lawyer (Frontline). Unfortunately, this story is but one of many.

According to the International Women's Human Rights Center La Strada, "in 2005 a total of 415 criminal cases were opened in Ukraine on Article 149 of the Criminal Code "Human Trafficking or Other Illegal Agreement Concerning a Human Being," [but only] 109 verdicts were delivered" (Kyiv Weekly, 2006, para. 3). Over the eight months of 2006, there were 282 criminal cases but only 50 verdicts (Kyiv Weekly, 2006, para. 3). This suggests that often laws and law enforcement agencies favor the criminals rather than the victims of trafficking. This is likely a result of inexperience in such matters, corruption in the system, women's low status in society, and strong cultural stereotypes which disfavor the trafficked women and girls.

The status of women worsened after the fall of the Soviet Union (Corrin, 2005). Cultural beliefs and customs, especially in rural areas, preclude many women who have been raped or trafficked to talk about what happened to them. They are rightfully afraid that they will become an outcast in society, losing the respect and support of their families. Not only governments, laws, the legal system, and law enforcement agencies must change in order to minimize trafficking of women, but also society's attitudes need to adjust to properly re-integrate victims back into society. The real source of the problem is that demand drives the victimization of the supply while poor economic conditions provide a large pool of victims.

The Problem: Supply and Demand

Poor economic and social conditions appear to be the primary deciding factors in female emigration from the territory of the former Soviet Union. These conditions create a vulnerable supply of potential victims susceptible to exploitation by traffickers as many women accept risks associated with seeking economic opportunities abroad. The sex demand for former Soviet

women fuels the vicious trafficking trade. Where there is demand, people find a way to create supply; therefore, important keys to minimizing women trafficking are to lower the demand and protect the supply.

History has demonstrated that wherever economic conditions are difficult and laws are weak, slavery tends to exist with relative impunity. More effective law enforcement can reduce the sex demand and impede the trade. Victims need legal protection from traffickers not only on paper but also in action. Improving the economic and social conditions of women would shrink the pool of vulnerable women; better treatment of victims would facilitate their return to a normal life. The governments of the former Soviet republics would do well to focus on efforts that ensure women have access to reasonable employment, stable wages, paid maternity leave with the option of returning to work, and affordable day care. Women provide an essential foundation for stable families and a stable society; they are also invaluable to population growth and economic productivity. These factors are reason enough to take action, but there is also a sound universal principle that calls for justice: Mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and friends deserve freedom from exploitation.

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